

Break My Fall

Drindalis

Break My Fall by Drindalis

Category: IT (2017), IT - Stephen King

Genre: Are You Reddie Kids, Canonical Child Abuse, Eddie finds out about his Illnesses™, Emotional Hurt/Comfort, Emotional Manipulation, Emotional/Psychological Abuse, Hurt/Comfort, Implied/Referenced Child Abuse, M/M, Mental Health Issues, Mental Illness, Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy, Richie Is A Good Bro, Sonia Kaspbrak's A+ Parenting

Language: English

Characters: Ben Hanscom, Beverly Marsh, Bill Denbrough, Eddie Kaspbrak, Mike Hanlon, Minor OCs (doctor/teacher characters), Richie Tozier, Sonia Kaspbrak, Stanley Urís

Relationships: Eddie Kaspbrak/Richie Tozier

Status: Completed

Published: 2017-11-04

Updated: 2017-11-04

Packaged: 2020-02-01 00:19:50

Rating: Teen And Up Audiences

Warnings: No Archive Warnings Apply

Chapters: 1

Words: 3,941

Publisher: archiveofourown.org

Summary:

"Good morning, class. Today we're going to continue our unit on mental illnesses. Now, we have a really interesting one here. Münchausen syndrome, and to a lesser extent, Münchausen syndrome by proxy."

Eddie tilted his head at the unfamiliar word and wrote it carefully at the top of the paper, wondering why he felt dread at the sight of it printed down, like that made it real. He didn't like this word, he decided, and hoped the actual illness was as forgettable as the correct spelling of the word itself was.

He was wrong.

Break My Fall

Author's Note:

Hello world! I just had the urge to write Eddie learning that his mother might have Münchausen syndrome by proxy and thought 'How awful would it be to find out something so personal in a classroom?' Thus this was born. Hope you enjoy! Also just a heads up, all the medical information was found on webMD, I am not by any means a doctor. ;)

Richie heaved out a dramatic groan as he walked into Health class, flopping his too-heavy backpack onto the ground and sliding into a desk, one finger shoving his glasses back into position as he shot Eddie and Stan a pathetic expression. "This is the end for me. I'm dying, Eddie Spaghetti, make sure you cremate me and rub my ashes all over your mom, it'll be the last time I get my hands on her-"

Eddie sputtered as he sat down at a desk next to him, letting his bag nudge Richie in retaliation. "That is so not funny-"

Stan tuned the two of them out as they began to banter about who was more gross, whose mom was more gross, with the occasional "Beep beep, Richie," thrown in for good measure.

Slowly the rest of the class trickled in, Bill and Bev the only other Losers who shared this class. Ben had already taken Health at his other school and didn't need to take it again, and Mike was homeschooled.

"Ruh-Richie, do you ever st-stop cuh-com-complaining?" Bill teased with a grin, taking the empty seat next to Stan, while Bev took the only other free one on Eddie's left.

Richie grinned proudly. "Not if I can help it, but I'll keep you posted just in case I take a vacation from talking shit, Big Bill."

Stan's head was flopped on his arm but he raised the other one. "I want to know about that in advance, so I can plan a celebration."

Richie faked a wounded look and turned to Bev. "Are you hearing this? No appreciation for talent anymore. At least you like my complaints!"

She snorted helplessly behind her hand, shaking her head. "Put me on the exclusion list too, Trashmouth."

Richie gasped dramatically, recoiling and putting one hand over his heart. "Bevvie my love, you wound me. Thine tongue is as sharp as any blade!" He announced dramatically in an over the top Shakespearean accent, before turning to Eddie hopefully. "At least my little Spaghetti Man thinks I'm funny!"

Eddie's expression remained carefully neutral.

Richie blinked and stared at him seriously, slowly inching his face closer and closer until he was almost brushing Eddie's cheek with his nose.

Eddie's mouth twitched slightly upwards at the corner as he fought against a laugh.

Richie spun around abruptly as he finally spoke, turning to Stan who was still attempting to nap at his desk. "Hey, Stan the Man, would you let me screw you if I was the last person left on earth?"

Stan flushed red and shot him an embarrassed look. "What the hell is wrong with you, Richie, there's no way!"

Richie smirked and waggled his eyebrows as he dropped the punchline. "Okay, well, who's gonna be around to stop me?"

Stan scowled and flipped him off as Eddie lost control and burst into a laughing fit, coughing for a bit before pulling his inhaler out of his fanny pack and breathing from it heavily. "Damn it, Richie, are you trying to kill me?"

Richie piped up excitedly. "Ooh, wait, hold onto your booty shorts, Eds, I got another one."

Bill groaned good naturedly and Bev grinned, scribbling doodles on her blank notebook while they waited for class to start.

"I do not wear booty shorts! If I pretend to laugh at this next joke will you stop calling me 'Eds'?" Eddie asked dryly.

Richie grinned, undeterred. "Not a chance, Eddie Spaghetti. Now, how does Greta Keene change a light bulb?"

Even Stan perked up at this promising opening line. Eddie just sighed. "I dunno, Richie, how?"

"She holds it up to the socket and waits for the world to revolve around her."

Bev burst out laughing, smothering her giggles with her hand. Eddie cracked up as well, but cut himself off quickly as the Health teacher, Mr. Daniels, entered the room to stand at the front.

"Morning, class. Today we're going to continue studying mental illnesses."

Stan leaned over and whispered to Bill. "We know all about those, we hang out with Richie." Bill snickered quietly into his hand while Richie leaned over and flicked Stan's kippah in response.

Eddie stowed his inhaler away and reached for his notebook, writing the date and class at the top in his small, neat handwriting.

"Where did we leave off last time, class? Oh, right, schizophrenia. Now, schizophrenia has the tendency-"

Richie leaned over and whispered to Eddie. "Can I copy off of you?"

Eddie went to scoot his notebook over out of habit and then scowled at Richie when he realized the page was empty. "You suck."

"Nah, Mrs. K handles that." Richie shot back and Eddie was glad their group was in the back so Mr. Daniels wouldn't see him flip Richie the bird.

"Dude, fuck off, I can't hear." Eddie whispered, attention drifting back over to the teacher to catch the rest of his lecture.

"-so just keep in mind, that *will* be on the test. Now, next we have a

really interesting one here. Münchausen syndrome and to a lesser extent, Münchausen syndrome by proxy. This is considered a more extreme version of your standard hypochondria."

Eddie's ears perked up slightly, a small feeling of dread whirling in his gut for no reason at all. He copied the name down on his paper neatly.

"Münchausen syndrome is a mental disorder where someone deliberately acts like they're sick or hurt, possibly for the attention it receives."

Eddie's heart stuttered in his chest.

Richie bit his lip and shot a glance over at the smaller boy, who was staring at Mr. Daniels with a look of carefully hidden worry on his face. He nudged him once but Eddie didn't look over.

Eddie's mind began to race a million miles a minute. *'Oh, God, is that me? Is that something I have? B-But Mom says that I'm delicate, she takes me to the doctor all the time and I never seem to get any better, is that my fault? Do I have Munchy-houses syndrome?!'*

Mr. Daniels kept talking, unaware of Eddie's internal panic. "Symptoms of possible Münchausen syndrome are reporting irregular symptoms to their doctors that are not controllable and that become more severe or change once treatment has begun..."

Strike one for Eddie.

"...Extensive knowledge of hospitals and/or medical terminology, as well as the textbook descriptions of illnesses..."

Strike two.

Eddie's heart rate was quickening and now Bill and Stan were whispering and looking over at him. *'Oh fuck they're thinking about how I'm always going on about diseases and illness, what if I AM messed up in the head?!'*

"-and the willingness or eagerness to have medical tests, operations, or other procedures performed..."

Str-

Wait, what?

Eddie hated having to go to the doctor, hated being fussed over and inspected like a fine piece of china by his mother and her favorite doctor of the week. That wasn't a symptom he had.

"...lastly, the presence of symptoms only when the patient is with others or being observed."

'*You're out.*' Eddie thought as he sighed in relief, settling back down in his desk. His asthma acted up all the time at home, too, away from his friends. He couldn't have Münchausen syndrome. Eddie relaxed, and hadn't even noticed he had been sitting ramrod straight, leaning forward as if Mr. Daniels held all the answers in the universe.

"Any questions? No? Okay, now let's talk about Münchausen syndrome by proxy."

Eddie bit his lip and sighed. '*Can't we just move on? Talk about something else, anything else, hell, I'd rather go over STDs again like last month than hear more about this-!*'

Mr. Daniels carried on, oblivious to Eddie's discomfort. "Münchausen by proxy is much less common than regular Münchausen syndrome, but it can be even more dangerous."

Eddie's stomach was in knots and he felt dread for some reason, but he purposefully did not touch his inhaler.

"Münchausen syndrome by proxy is a mental health problem where the caregiver makes up or causes an illness or injury to a person under their care, such as an elderly adult, someone with a disability, or a child-"

Eddie felt the blood rush from his face in an instant and his heart plummet to somewhere around his shoes.

He heard Stan and Bill's whispers start up again and Beverly shooting him nervous glances from the side. Richie poked him and began to whisper, "Eds...psst! Spaghetti Man...hey!"

He didn't look over, didn't think he could right now.

"Because vulnerable people are the victims, MSBP is a form of abusive behavior. Now write that down because it will be on the test-"

Eddie's hands trembled violently even as his pencil traced the word slowly onto the paper. The lead snapped on the 'e' in 'abuse' from the force of his shaking and his pencil dropped to the floor. He made no move to pick it up.

"Eds!" Richie whispered louder, sounding worried. Eddie kept biting his lip, trying to keep his breathing under control even as the words on his paper seemed to jump out at him.

Münchausen syndrome by proxy

Abuse

Abuse

ABUSE

His thoughts raced to his mother, always rushing him to the doctor anytime he so much as looked peaky at the dinner table.

He felt ill.

'Better go tell Mom oh yes she'll love that, don't worry Eddie dear she'll always be here to take care of youuuu~'

"Now, there are several characteristics of someone with MSBP tendencies. They will seem extremely devoted to the person they are caring for, and will have an almost encyclopedic knowledge of different illnesses and symptoms."

"Doctor Yates, he's got the classic symptoms of someone with an advanced case of celiac disease! He needs medication immediately, oh, my poor little Eddieeee...!"

"Sonia, please, with all due respect, I need to examine him before I can prescribe anything. Please leave the diagnosing to the professionals..."

"They will often switch from hospital to hospital if they aren't satisfied with the attention they receive from one. This mental illness is often caused by a need to feel powerful and in control."

'Don't tell me this, don't, shut up shut up shut UP-'

All he could hear was Mr. Daniels' bored and droning voice, soft whispering, and the sound of his heartbeat pounding in his ears.

"Sometimes the caregiver suddenly changes doctors and lies about prior testing and treatment. Normal test results don't reassure the caregiver and they may demand more extreme testing. He or she may be strangely calm or even happy when their charges' condition is getting worse."

Eddie blinked back tears.

"Eddie, dear, we're not going to see Doctor Yates today! He's a quack, doesn't know what he's talking about. No, we're driving up to Bangor to meet with a specialist. They'll help you feel better in no time at all!"

"B-But, Mom, we've been going to see Doctor Yates for years...! Why are we going to Bangor?"

"Honey, honey, calm down, you'll give yourself an asthma attack. Try your inhaler, sweetie, you'll feel better if you do. Don't be scared, Mommy will make sure you're okay."

He was going to be sick.

"Doctors usually can tell when a person has MSBP when the patient has an unusual condition or illness that has unexplained reoccurring symptoms-"

"Don't worry, Eddie, dear, THIS doctor will know what's wrong."

"-or if the patient doesn't get better, even with treatments that should help. The symptoms may only occur when the caregiver is with or has recently been with the patient, but those same symptoms get better or go away when the caregiver is not there or is being closely watched."

'Oh God sometimes when I'm with Richie or Stan and Bill I don't need my inhaler at all!'

"Another warning sign is if another family member has a long history of illness, and then dies. The caregiver will usually just turn their attention to another family member."

Eddie was going to fucking pass out on top of his desk, with thoughts of his father dancing in his head.

There had never been a time when he had seen him not sick.

Cancer, his mother had said, nothing they could do.

His breathing was coming in harsh gasps and wheezes, his hands shaking even as he bit his lip harder to keep the noises in. People were going to stare if he didn't.

"Keep in mind that the police consider MSBP a severe form of emotional abuse. Sometimes due to the emotional abuse at their caretaker's hands, a patient who is cared for by someone with MSBP will grow up to have Münchausen syndrome themselves." Mr. Daniels said, flipping to a different page in the textbook.

Eddie's heart stopped.

'No, no...nonono, I can't, I don't want...I-I'm not...not like that-!'

He thought of the time he had patched up Bill when he took a tumble off of Silver and skinned his knee and palms, pulling bandages and disinfectant from his fanny pack and jabbering on about what to do when he got home, how to take care of it. He thought of the way Bill had smiled gratefully at him when he was done, thought of how good it made him feel to be useful, to help.

He thought of himself scolding an imaginary child for playing in the dirt, his own voice as soft and simpering as his mother's. Imagined himself controlling his own kid's life the way Sonia controlled his.

'I think I'm gonna puke now.' Eddie thought wildly, before suddenly Richie turned to him and spoke loudly.

"Hey Eds, pass me a couple of your Advils, I feel like shit."

Eddie blinked, momentarily broken out of his mental breakdown, before he began to fumble with the zipper of his fanny pack for the requested bottle.

Mr. Daniels arched an eyebrow. "Something the matter, Tozier?" He asked, even as Eddie shook two blue pills into Richie's hand.

"Not feelin' too hot, teach."

Mr. Daniels sighed, probably anticipating at least one of the students attempting to cut class. "Go see the nurse, Tozier. Kaspbrak, since you're actually likely to come back, can you please go with him to make sure he doesn't dilly dally in the halls?"

Eddie nodded as he stood up and followed Richie out of the classroom, feeling nothing but relief. All he could think about was how grateful he was for Richie getting sick, he just wanted to be out of there-

'You're GLAD your best friend is sick? You really are going to turn out just like your mom.'

He gave a soft whimper and that was when Richie pulled him into the empty nurse's office. He peeked in the hallway once and shut the door behind them, before he turned to grab Eddie a glass of water. "Hey, Spaghetti Man, you okay?" He asked, his voice soft as he handed Eddie the water.

Eddie took it numbly, nodded once, took a sip, and then shook his head. "N...no. I-I...don't call me Spaghetti Man." He settled on instead, hands trembling around the glass. Richie sat down on the cot next to him, looking over at him through his oversized glasses and surprisingly not making any jokes. "Aren't...you not feeling well...? Do you need another pill..?"

Richie shrugged and flicked the two Advil into the garbage. "I'm fine, it's you I'm worried about. I needed a way to get you out of class so I played hooky."

Eddie frowned but didn't meet his gaze, feeling worthless.

"Do you...want to talk about what happened in class?"

Eddie tried playing dumb. "Nothing happened in class. I'm okay, I just-"

Richie arched an eyebrow in disbelief and Eddie's argument crumbled.

"I....no, Richie, I'm not. Not okay, not at all." His chest felt tight and he reached for his inhaler out of instinct, before freezing and staring at it. He set it back down, unused, fighting through the wheezes to speak. "M...Mr. Daniels s-said it's...this proxy thing, he said it was...!"

"Abuse?" Richie supplied, Eddie flinching away as if the word itself was evil.

"I-I'm not being abused! I-I'm not! A-Abuse is like...like what Bev's dad does to her, or...." he trailed off helplessly.

"Or what my parents sometimes do?" Richie said softly since he knew Eddie wouldn't say it.

Eddie looked down and felt nothing but shame. How could he be sitting here complaining to his best friend who he *knew* had a terrible home life, and whine about his mother caring too much?

"I-I'm not b-being...*abused!*" He spat the word like an expletive. "M-my mom, she just...she worries, that's all, she just...wants what's best for m-me..."

Richie and Eddie sat in silence for a moment before Richie spoke up, softer than Eddie could remember hearing him.

"When I was a little kid, I wasn't like I am now."

Eddie blinked and slowly glanced over to see Richie fiddling with a loose string on his jeans.

"I was really well behaved, I didn't make noise when I played with my toys, I cleaned up any messes I made and I did my chores on time."

He paused, hesitating, and Eddie found himself biting his lip again.

"In those days, my mom wasn't drinking so much, but my dad was. They used to get in fights all the time, and he would knock her around a lot. Broke her nose once, but she would never leave. I was scared they were going to get a divorce. I...I should hate my dad, you know? But I can't. He's my old man. And he didn't hit her all the time, just when he got too drunk or too mad. So I didn't want to see them break up..."

Eddie took another sip of water, enraptured by this story and hoping the tight feeling in his chest would go away soon.

"Once Mom start drinking she got real mad real quick. I remember once I dropped a glass and broke it, and she made me walk over the shards to get to the broom. She was too drunk to notice, I guess." Richie said, and Eddie found himself hoping that was actually the reason and not that she was just that heartless.

"My dad came home and screamed at me for tracking blood up the stairs to the house. It was the first time in years I had seen Mom and Dad actually united against something, even if that something was me."

Eddie felt a wave of sadness wash over him, and wondered why Richie never told anybody.

The dark haired trashmouth pushed his glasses higher up his nose. "I realized something that day. It didn't matter how perfect I acted or how well behaved I could be, they would never be happy. It was never enough. So I said, fuck it." Richie shrugged.

Eddie ignored the inner voice that sounded like his mother screeching about germs and reached over to squeeze Richie's hand. The taller boy shot him a wry smile.

"I started speaking my mind, talked a lot of shit to them. Broke stuff, skipped chores, started staying out later. As long as Dad was always scolding me, he wasn't hitting mom, and if I wasn't helping around the house, Mom had to do it, and so she couldn't spend as much time drinking. It's honestly better now than it was. I get in trouble and it

gives Mom and Dad something to agree on, how much of a brat I am." He said this with pride, with a smile.

Eddie looked up at Richie and felt amazement that this strong, brave, beautiful boy was his best friend. "Wh..why are you telling me this?"

Richie reached out and ruffled his hair and Eddie resisted the urge to pull away and fix it. "Because, Eddie Spaghetti, nothing changed in my house until I did. And maybe it's the same for you."

Eddie stared at him helplessly until Richie elaborated, his voice going back up to its regular volume.

"I mean, you and I both know Mrs. K isn't going to suddenly stop smothering you about your health, and I don't think that this Münchhausen by proxy thing has a magical overnight cure."

"So what do I *do*?" Eddie asked desperately, hand clenching around his inhaler. God, he wanted a puff, wanted to make the tight feeling in his chest go away, but he couldn't stop thinking about how if he did, he would be playing into his mom's games. He had noticed, of course, that his inhaler had 'administer as needed' printed neatly on the label. If it was...if it was real medicine, it wouldn't say that, there would be some sort of limit, right?

"Well, I think you need to rebel. Stop taking the pills, for starters."

"Wh-what?" Eddie exclaimed in shock. "She'll be so upset with me! She'll *cry*! I can't do that!"

Richie gave him a knowing look. "Eds, you heard Daniels back there. People with MSBP will make their kids feel like they're sick to try and control them, keep power over them. When your mom cries and pitches a fit, that's what she's doing, Spaghetti Man. Controlling you. And you're letting her do it."

Eddie grit his teeth, suddenly feeling angry. "I am not!"

Richie crossed his arms. "If you just keep doing what she says, she's never going to get any better either."

Eddie froze and frowned. It was a seriously valid point and he knew

it.

"And she'll keep doing this and doing this until your liver gives out from taking all these stupid pills and you kick the bucket, and then what will she do? Me, probably, but she won't be in the mood for anything other than vanilla sex and that get boring after awhile."

Eddie reeled back and punched Richie in the arm. Normally he kept his hits light for fear of breaking something, '*you're delicate, Eddie, delicate and fragile-!*' but this time he used his full strength. Richie yelped in pain and shot him a scowl that became a wide grin.

"Ouch, you little-! ...Ohhh, I see what you're up to. How's it feel to finally be a real boy?"

Eddie huffed in exasperation but smirked, cautiously unclipping his fanny pack and letting it drop into the garbage can behind him as they walked out of the nurse's office. He immediately felt lighter, and the voice in his head that sounded like Sonia Kaspbrak fell miraculously silent. "I dunno, why don't you talk some shit to me after school and we can find out? I don't know if I want to pound your face into the dirt for being being too damned honest all the time or kiss you for it."

Richie turned and shot him a smirk, striking a dramatic pose. "You could do both. That's pretty kinky, Edster."

Eddie hit him again, and they both broke into laughs in the hallway as they headed towards Mr. Daniels' class.

Richie shot him a wave as they hit the turn that led to the classroom, heading straight for the exterior door instead. "Hey, Eddie Spaghetti, can you bring my bag and shit to next period? I'm gonna catch a smoke real quick."

Eddie nodded before pausing, hesitant.

He turned away from the classroom and followed after Richie.

"Bev'll get both of our bags. Can I bum a cigarette off you?"

Richie threw his head back and laughed loudly, boisterously,

throwing an arm over his shoulder and tugging Eddie close to his side. "Ohh, Eds, I thought you'd never ask."